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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
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RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 5302
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0602
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 0372
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1260
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ 1305
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 1900
RUEHMU/AMEMBASSY MANAGUA 0266
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO 0660
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 1008
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA 2779
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 1396
RUEHSJ/AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE 0353
RUEHSN/AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR 1489
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 0506
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA 0238

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 002159

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [VE](#) [SP](#)
SUBJECT: DEMARCHE ON DEMOCRACY IN VENEZUELA

REF: A. STATE 154674

[1](#)B. MADRID 2123

[1](#)C. MADRID 2077

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES HUGO LLORENS, REASONS 1.4B AND D.

[1](#)1. (C) Charge d'Affaires delivered ref a demarche November 23 to MFA Secretary of State for Iberoamerica Trinidad Jimenez and the Director General for Iberoamerica Javier Sandomingo. Drawing also on information provided by WHA/AND concerning Chavez' ties to Iran and increased narcotics trafficking from Venezuela, the Charge urged that Spain continue to speak out publicly in support of democracy in Venezuela, as FM Moratinos did when Chavez threatened RCTV.

[1](#)2. (C) Jimenez demurred, saying Spain was trying to avoid being drawn into more public controversy with Chavez following the King's rebuke (ref b) and despite Chavez' continued rhetorical provocation. Jimenez said public opposition from Spain would only help Chavez whip up his supporters for the constitutional referendum. Pressed by the Charge to help the EU develop a constructive position, Jimenez said that Spain would try to do something, but would want to avoid an appearance of directly interfering in Venezuela's internal affairs. She said a possibility was to get a statement at the EU or European Parliament level. Jimenez also said the Spanish Government was working behind the scenes, feeding information to journalists on the threat to democracy in Venezuela.

[1](#)3. (C) Jimenez noted that post-Santiago Spain had received messages of solidarity from virtually every government in Latin America. She said Chavez (whom she described as a "clown") was isolated. Alluding to the "Kings' Club" Jimenez said the Saudis had given Chavez the cold shoulder at the recent OPEC meeting because of his rudeness to Juan Carlos. She said even Evo Morales was signaling by his body language in Santiago that Chavez was embarrassing him.

[1](#)4. (C) Jimenez agreed the proposed constitutional reforms would be a severe setback for democracy and noted that recent polls suggested that opposition was growing in Venezuelan society against the proposed changes to the constitution. She added, however, that it was tough for a government to

lose a referendum and predicted a close vote. Sandomingo said fraud was a real possibility. Jimenez mentioned she had met with the opposition during her recent visit to Caracas (ref c), and although disorganized it was getting better and finally trying to articulate a position. She also said even high oil prices could not sustain Chavez' fiscal irresponsibility; Spanish businessmen and independent analysts told her an economic collapse was a high possibility with 24 months.

LLORENS